



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release ON RECEIPT

### SMELT IS IDEAL AS A PAN FISH

"Freshly caught, the American smelt is considered one of the most delicious of pan fishes, the flesh being lean and sweet with a particularly delicate flavor"--thus declare the fish cookery experts of the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior.

About the first week in April the smelt "run" begins in the Lake Michigan area. These tiny fish ascend the rivers and creeks tributary to Green Bay in vast numbers, to spawn, and are caught by millions.

Here's the word picture of a smelt run from the U. S. Regional Cook Book: "The Escanaba (Michigan) Smelt Jamboree is held annually early in April in Escanaba and throughout Delta County, when the smelt come up the rivers from the Bay of Noc to breed. The waters are literally black with their shiny little bodies. Hundreds of people gather along the river banks to scoop out fish in dipnets. At the height of the run they can be scooped out with anything at hand--a hat or pail or any container. The dipping goes on from dusk until dawn, the dark waters illuminated by campfires along the shores."

The usual method of cooking smelts is by frying, after rolling the fish in flour, corn meal, or cracker crumbs. Large and small smelts are usually thought to be of equally good flavor. The three following recipes for frying are taken from 100 Tempting Fish Recipes.

#### Fried Smelts

Clean smelts, remove heads and tails. Do not remove the roe or milt. Wipe dry and roll in salted flour or corn meal. Heat 2 tablespoons of fat in a frying pan and fry fish brown. Cook the cut side first, turn and cook the other side. Serve with parsley butter. Start with fresh oil for each panful to prevent black crumbs from the previous lot sticking to the next lot of fish.

#### Smelts in Olive Oil

Clean and wipe the fish, roll in salted flour, then in the beaten egg, sprinkle with the fine bread crumbs. Put in frying pan, olive or other vegetable oil; when hot, place the smelts in, cook two or three minutes, then turn. Serve with Tartar or Hollandaise sauce.

#### Smelts in Deep Fat

Clean and wipe the fishes. String on wooden or metal skewer, running it through the eyes. Soak in milk, then roll in flour. Put in deep fat, three to four minutes. Place on brown paper. Season. Serve on hot platter with slices of lemon and parsley.

The U. S. Regional Cook Book, in its Mississippi Valley section, gives this interesting method for baking smelt:

#### Baked Smelt

2 pounds smelt  
1/2 pound bacon

Pepper  
1/2 cup beef stock

Clean and soak smelt in salt bath overnight. Rinse. Pour boiling water over smelt and allow to stand 5 minutes. Place the fish in a dripping pan. Place a thin slice of bacon over each fish, if large, or a generous covering if small. Sprinkle with pepper as desired, add water or beef stock, and bake in a moderate oven (350 degrees F.) 20 minutes, or until very little moisture remains and fish are cooked through. Serve with catchup. Serves 4 to 6.

From Ida Bailey Allen's Service Cook Book, comes this recipe.

### Baked Stuffed Smelts

8 large smelts	2 tbsps. lemon juice
1/2 cup prepared or home-made stuffing	2 tbsps. buttered bread crumbs

Remove the heads, tails and fins; and clean the smelts. Fill with the stuffing; sprinkle with salt and pepper; and arrange on a shallow oiled baking pan. Pour over the lemon juice; cover; and bake in a hot oven for ten minutes. Uncover; sprinkle with crumbs; and continue baking for about five minutes, or until the crumbs are brown.

On the West Coast, where smelt enjoy great popularity, it is known as either silver or Columbia River smelt, and the following recipes, taken from Five Hundred Ways to Prepare California Sea Foods, are favorite methods of preparation:

### Baked Smelt

Clean and dip in beaten egg and then in cracker crumbs, season with salt and pepper, lay in a buttered pan, putting a piece of butter on top of each fish, and bake about 10 or 15 minutes until nicely browned. Serve on hot plate garnished with lemon and parsley.

### Baked Smelt, Meyer

Twelve smelts, two ounces fresh butter, bread crumbs, and salt. Wash and dry fish thoroughly, then arrange them nicely in a flat baking dish. Cover with fine bread crumbs and place over them little pieces of butter. Season and bake about 15 minutes. Just before serving add a squeeze of lemon juice and garnish with parsley and cut lemon. Serves six.

### Boned Smelt

Take a dozen raw smelts, split them from the back lengthwise, leaving the head and tail intact; take out the large center bone without opening the stomach and season with salt. Put one-half cupful of butter into a saucepan and when quite hot place the smelts in it so that the side which was cut open is underneath. When they have attained a nice color, turn them over and finish cooking. When ready arrange them on a very hot dish, pour the butter in which they were cooked over them, squeeze a little lemon on them, then sprinkle with finely chopped green parsley. Serve hot. Serves six.

### Italian Style Smelt

Clean six smelts, wash and wipe dry, season with salt and pepper, place in a buttered frying pan, cover with white wine and a little fish stock, set on the fire and let boil. Cover with a piece of buttered paper and put in a

moderate oven until done. Remove to a hot platter. Reduce the liquor and add 2 tbsps. of sauce made of shallots, mushrooms, and parsley fried in butter. Then add half a glassful of tomato sauce and boil for about 5 minutes; season to taste. Pour sauce over the smelts and garnish with chopped parsley and serve. Serves three.

The smelt "run" generally lasts about four to six weeks, during which time the prices may become very low. Measuring only 6 or 7 inches in length, smelts are mostly sold fresh. The fresh-water variety is usually considered to belong to the same species as the marine smelt. Throughout their wide geographic range--which includes both coasts of the North Atlantic, the North Pacific, and the Arctic Oceans--there are localities where these fish are permanently fresh-water residents.

There are no records of the natural occurrence of the smelt in the Great Lakes, but this species was planted several times in inland lakes of Michigan, among them Crystal and Torch Lakes in the lower peninsula, and Trout and Howe Lakes in the upper peninsula. Some of these plantings evidently escaped into Lake Michigan where the species multiplied rapidly.

In Dr. William C. Kendall's publication, The Smelts, he has this to say about planting attempts: "While considerable success has attended the attempts to stock New England waters with smelts, it appears that some difficulty has been encountered in efforts to stock waters at a greater distance from the source of supply. The most signal success in stocking distant waters, however, that has come to our attention is that of Crystal Lake in Michigan. It appears that of 20,400,000 eggs shipped to the Michigan Fish Commission from the Green Lake (Maine) station of the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries in April 1912, 16,400,000 were planted in a tributary of this lake. In 1922 the result of the introduction was manifested by the appearance of breeding fish in tributary streams of the lake."

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